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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the past and current attitudes and practices toward hiring, retaining, and promoting African American faculty members, and explores suggestions and predictions pertaining to increased inclusion of African Americans on university and college faculties. It argues that the major problem resulting from the lack of African American faculty in universities and colleges is the impression it gives to African American youngsters, White youngsters, and African American and White university and college staff. Discussed are some of the reasons cited for this shortage of African American professors including institutional racism, failure of affirmative action policies, low numbers of African American Ph.Ds, declining emphasis on recruiting and retaining graduate minority students, and a discouraging employment outlook for new doctorate holders. The paper argues that the problem of increasing African American faculty in universities and colleges is acute; and that it is the role of the educational community to lead the way in preparing the nation, which will soon be more evenly divided among African Americans, Whites, and Latin Americans, into the 21st century. Contains 11 references. (GLR)

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THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND PROMOTION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FACULTY IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

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The declining numbers of African American faculty members at predominately white universities and colleges is a major concern of educators in the United States. The unsettling component of this situation is that unless radical changes are implemented in recruiting, retaining, and promoting African American faculty, this situation will worsen before it becomes better.

This review will examine the past and current attitudes and practices toward hiring, retaining, and promoting African American faculty members, and it will also explore suggestions and predictions pertaining to increased inclusion of African Americans on university and college faculties. The rationale for this review is based on the fact that although African Americans comprise only about two percent of the university and college faculty in the United States, the minuteness of this number is not the most critical problem. The major problem resulting from the lack of African American faculty in universities and colleges is the impression it gives to African American youngsters, white youngsters, and African American and white university and college staff.

Washington (1986) suggests that if African American

students are helped by the presence of African American faculty then so are white students and white faculty. White students, when seeing few African Americans among their professors, may erroneously conclude that few African Americans have the right stuff (the qualifications) to serve as university and college professors. Taking a course with an African American professor would provide the kind of experience and interaction that would help the white student overcome prejudicial notions the white student may harbor about African American intellectual capabilities. White faculties, likewise, through discussion and mutual exchange of ideas and perspectives, stand to gain a deeper understanding for African American cultural heritage.

Alali, Ross, & Calhoun (1988) propose that African American professors are becoming a vanishing breed due to personal dislikes of African Americans by tenured faculty, and institutional roadblocks which prevent the recruitment, retention, and promotion of African American faculty. These authors argue further that publications by African American professors are often dismissed as either non-scholarly or " too ethnic " in nature, and African American professors are hired at a lower rank than their white counterparts.

This review will discuss some of the reasons cited

for this shortage of African American professors. The reasons include, but are not limited to, institutional racism, failure of affirmative action policies, low numbers of African American Ph.D.'s, declining emphasis on recruiting and retaining graduate minority students, and a discouraging outlook for new doctorate holders.

Problem Parameters

The parameters for this review will address the recruitment, retention, and promotion of African American faculty by predominately white universities and colleges. The three aforementioned factors are all interrelated and the motivational issues inherent in the implementation or nonimplementation of these practices are similar.

Review of the Literature

The recruitment of African American faculty members is the first step in achieving a proactive, multicultural campus, with a positive attitude and atmosphere conducive to preparing the students for the future. Some universities and colleges are attempting to increase African American faculty members in response to the Adams vs. Richardson (1988) decision, which directed the dismantling of dual systems of publicly supported universities and colleges. Many other institutions are attempting to increase African

American faculty for higher morale reasons. Collins & Johnson (1988) propose that the general decline in minority enrollment in higher education can be partly attributed to the lack of minority faculty to serve as role models and mentors. Collins & Johson suggest methods of enhancing the recruitment process of African American faculty members. They suggest that: (a) as many temporary faculty positions as possible be converted to tenure track positions and (b) that deans and department heads go beyond searches designed to replace, with a clone, the recently retired, 25 year veteran faculty member with a highly esoteric scholarly interest. Collins & Johnson continue by proposing that the " old boy network " approach to hiring be discouraged. They go on to say university and college admission officers realize that the likelihood of converting a prospective new student into an enrolled student is increased substantially by having that prospective student visit the campus. They believe that the same strategy would work with prospective new faculty, and they suggest that funds should be allocated to bring faculty prospects to campus for informal visits. If those visits with host departments, students, and administration result in strong mutual interest by both the prospect and the host department, a position should be posted, and a formal

interview scheduled. This, of course, is posting positions for which minority prospects with needed areas of specialization have already been identified. La None & Lee (cited in Collins & Johnson, 1988) point to this strategy as a potential target for court challenge.

Washington (1986) concurs with the belief that there are few African American Ph. D.'s because there are few African American faculty to serve as role models and mentors to those African American graduate students who aspire to be Ph. D.'s. Washington goes on to say that studies show that scholars tend to act as mentors to students who are most like themselves. Consequently, as things presently exist, the instructional system appears to be geared to support the white male student.

Blackwell (1988) suggests that there is a white monopoly on enrollment in graduate school. He proposes that this monopoly has far reaching implications for access, training, and production of minorities with the educational requisites for faculty positions in universities and colleges. Simply put, if minorities can not gain access to graduate education and if significant numbers do not attain the doctoral degree, then obviously the pool of minority group members is limited while a substantial volume of white candidates continues.

Collins (1988) proposes a recruitment approach with a twist to it. He suggests that a number of teacher training institutions form consortiums and provide fellowships for minority candidates who are interested in obtaining doctorates and becoming university and college professors. While fellowships for African Americans and other minorities is not a novel idea, the number of institutions combing their resources to provide the necessary support is not something that has been traditionally carried out, and is not wide spread.

Collins further suggests that, generally speaking, minorities are attracted to schools in metropolitan areas or rural institutions that are within an hour's travel time to the nearest city. Therefore, schools that find themselves in areas which are isolated and too far from what some consider to be civilization should give serious thought to planning and implementing visiting, adjunct, and faculty exchange professorships during summer sessions. The institutions should also attempt to attract minorities by offering term contracts for one semester or for one or even two years. Such arrangements would provide the institutions with a diverse, though frequently changing population. In a statement to the author - a Summer Minority Scholar in the Penn State program - President Bryce Jordan

(cited in Collins, 1988) made no attempt to disguise the fact that some subtle (and yet not too subtle) purposes of the Penn State program are: (a) to allow administrators and regular faculty to observe scholars as they interact with students and faculty, (b) to become cognizant of their teaching techniques and strategies, (c) to evaluate their grasp of subject matter, and (d) to eventually offer them faculty positions as they become available.

Moore (1988) chooses to elaborate on the importance of the faculty in recruiting African American professors. Moore suggests that most things change in a university or college when the faculty decides it wants them to change. The faculty members are gatekeepers. They provide the advice and consent to leadership. While a strong and committed administrative leadership can influence a faculty, as a general rule the faculty controls access to its ranks.

At this point it is important to understand the crucial roles of the faculty. They establish and chair search committees. They determine the criterion for selection, screen the applicants, conduct the interviews, influence the decision makers, and check their networks for nominations and references. Additionally, they negotiate among themselves to determine which candidate to support if there is not a clear agreement on a specific candidate; and they submit their final subjective judgments with regard

to who will be recommended to serve as faculty members in their institutions. The gatekeepers determine who is qualified and who is not; what rules to apply, break, or modify as it suits their objectives. African American candidates are not likely to have advocates on the search team, nor to be the recipients of the academic patronage of the " old boy " system.

Two other viewpoints concerning recruitment need to be addressed. It is undeniable that a person's formal education begins in kindergarten or first grade. It is from this framework that Moody (1988) suggests that the pipeline begins in elementary school and not at the undergraduate and graduate level. He goes on to propose that institutions of higher education have an obligation and responsibility to increase the quality and quantity of the education that minority students receive in K to 12 school systems.

The second issue regarding recruitment of African American faculty pertains to the use of outside resources. Universities and colleges need not feel compelled to deal with recruitment efforts without input from other sources. Cooperating efforts that include public school, business and government involvement are going to be far more productive and successful than minority recruitment efforts

conducted solely by the university. Each of the aforementioned groups has unique skills and resources that can be brought to bear on problems and issues related to minority recruitment (Golias, 1988). Zapota (cited in Golias, 1988) believes that in areas where minority populations are large, university-school partnerships must give high priority to the search for minority students with talent for teaching and offer them programs to nurture that talent.

Thus far recruitment has been explored; the areas of retention and promotion deserve scrutiny and revision as well. Collins (1988) relates that the problem of retaining recruited minorities continues to plague higher education institutions throughout the country. Once recruited and on board, African Americans are often overly patronized or patently ignored and given little or no guidance in adjusting to what had heretofore been a white institution. Additionally, African American professors are not encouraged to develop programs and courses which pertain to their own ethnicity or to publish articles which include the contributions and scholarship of African Americans. African American professors soon discover financial support for travel and other faculty development projects is reserved for senior tenured professors who

have proven themselves. Consequently, African American faculty are often denied tenure and promotion because they have failed to adjust to their new situation. So, in desperation, persons of color leave these institutions for those which are more consonant with their own background, training and ethnicity.

One means of encouraging African Americans and other minorities to remain on a predominately white university or college campus is through a mentoring program. Willie (cited in Collins, 1988) proposes that the first principle of mentoring is to accept the fact that the minority is unlike the majority. Whenever the minority feels that he/she has to forget where he/she came from, and act like someone who he/she is not, that person is in trouble. One of the best ways, Willie explained, for a faculty member or administrator to show acceptance of the protege is to break bread with them. Willie went on to say that mentoring can be performed by all sorts and all colors of people.

Blackwell (1988) reports that many junior minority faculty experience a revolving door syndrome. Individuals are hired, kept on the faculty for five or six years, evaluated negatively and are required to move on to another institution. Sometimes the process is repeated until the individual leaves university or college teaching. Some

African American faculty are hired as tokens, and in this position they are sometimes drawn into minority activities unrelated to their competencies or interests. These minority activities compete with publication and research demands. Pruitt (cited in Blackwell, 1988) stated that minority faculty often feel that they must respond to the needs of minority students who often feel alienated in predominately white institutions.

Blackwell goes on to report that a dilemma is created for minority faculty. On one hand, they must work and meet the traditional requirements for tenure and, on the other they must respond directly to student demands and departmental and institutional expectations not only to work with minority students but be the minority representative on every committee. Many who choose the latter course receive the impression that such responsiveness is appropriate and may compensate for lower scholarly output at the time of tenure consideration. Unfortunately, they are disillusioned when the same persons in their departments who encouraged them to assume responsibility for all things minority penalize them for inadequate scholarly productivity during tenure consideration.

The problem of increasing African American faculty in universities and colleges is acute. With the dire need for positive African American role models in our society it seems clear that the educational community must take the lead in preparing the country for the 21st century. In the 21st century, it is predicted that the population of the United States will be evenly divided among African Americans, whites, and Latin Americans. The schools, including the universities and colleges, must prepare for this change.

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